

Ex libris
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTAENSIS



JOHN SWINTON:
AMERICAN RADICAL
(1829-1901)

by Sender Garlin

INCLUDING THE FULL TEXT OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH KARL MARX IN 1880

Occasional Paper No. 20 (1976)

\$1.50



OCCASIONAL PAPERS SERIES NUMBER TWENTY (1976)

The American Institute for Marxist Studies (AIMS) is an educational, research and bibliographical institute. Its purposes are to encourage Marxist and radical scholarship in the United States and to help bring Marxist thought into the forum of reasonable debate to produce dialogue among Marxist and non-Marxist scholars and writers. Its policy is to avoid sectarian and dogmatic thinking. It engages in no political activity and takes no stand on political questions.

To these ends it invites the support and participation of all scholars and public-spirited individuals.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR MARXIST STUDIES
(AIMS)

20 EAST 30th STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y., 10016

Copyright 1976
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR MARXIST STUDIES, INC.
All Rights Reserved

UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA LIBRARY

CONTENTS

John Swinton: American Radical	1
Appendix A: John Swinton's Interview with Karl Marx	40
Appendix B: Karl Marx's Comment on the Translating of <u>Das Kapital</u>	43
Selected Bibliography	45

2611434

The world owes more, far more to John Swinton than it knows or perhaps ever can know. He was one of the real heroes of American history. He lived and labored wholly for his fellow-men. He struggled bravely with all the adverse fates and forces that others might be spared the pains and privations that fell to his lot and have life richer and more abundant. Aye, he fought as heroically and unselfishly for humanity as any man that ever won the crown of martyrdom.

--Eugene Victor Debs

The America of today needs to be reminded of men like John Swinton, a fighter in labor's cause as writer, editor, orator and organizer.

Shortly after his death seventy-five years ago, the New York Times reported that he had been "the champion of the workingmen with voice and pen" and cited the many crusades he had led. Referring to the labor publication he founded and edited, John Swinton's Paper, the Times noted that "he had been on the side of the masses, but his paper died for want of support by them." And it added, in a spirit of self-congratulation, that "the very class of people that Swinton tried to benefit neglected and frequently condemned him."

Evidently the Times sought to attribute its own duality to Swinton and thus devalue his accomplishments in the field of labor. For while it is well known that Swinton had taken a leading part in labor's battles for many decades, it was equally true that he had been a prominent and highly-regarded journalist, holding responsible posts on both the Times and the New York Sun.

In a tribute in the literary section of the Times shortly after Swinton's death, T. C. Evans termed him "aggressive" and "disputatious." He added, however, that Swinton "lived up to high professional standards and left a name worthy of respectful and admiring remembrance."

John Swinton was born on December 12, 1829, in Salton, near Edinburgh, Scotland. When he was 14 years old his parents moved to Canada, settling in Montreal. Shortly thereafter he began work as a printer's apprentice on the Montreal Witness, later becoming a journeyman printer, an occupation he followed until he became a newspaperman. After the family had moved to New York City, Swinton entered Williston Seminary in Northampton, Massachusetts. (When he had mastered the printing trade, he studied both law and medicine briefly.)

In the course of a long career, Swinton worked under three famous editors: Charles A. Dana, Horace Greeley, and Henry J. Raymond. He was associated with major New York newspapers for nearly a half century. He worked for the Times from 1860 to 1870. From 1875 to 1883, and again from 1892 to 1897, Swinton was on the editorial staff of the Sun. He also contributed to the New York Tribune, the New York World, the Brooklyn Eagle, the Irish World and the Scotsman.

Swinton lost his eyesight in 1889, but continued his work as journalist, teacher and writer until his death in Brooklyn Heights on December 15, 1901. He had been ill only 10 days. His wife, the daughter of Professor Orson Squire Fowler, a well-known phrenologist, survived him. There were no children. His death was noted not only

by the Times, the Sun, and the Tribune, but also by a number of Socialist and trade union journals.

In a commemorative article that appeared on December 28, 1901, Harper's Weekly declared that "the life work of this stalwart, bitter champion of the laborer reads like a romance. It was one continuous battle for the rights of the lowly and oppressed...a hater of sham, he fought bitterly, and with no hope of reward...."

As a journeyman printer, Swinton traveled extensively in the South and the West. In 1856 he went to Kansas to take part in the free-soil movement, but he arrived too late to join John Brown in the struggle. He remained, however, to become manager of the Lawrence, (Kansas) Republican.

On his return to New York, a casual contribution on medicine earned him a place on the Times. He became chief editorial writer of the paper in 1860. In 1875 Swinton joined Charles A. Dana's Sun, where he remained for eight years, becoming the chief of the editorial staff of that newspaper.

Like the friend he so much admired -- Walt Whitman -- Swinton had for years stood at his case ten hours a day, setting type for news dispatches and editorials. As a journeyman printer (like Mark Twain

and William Dean Howells), he saw much of the country, and what he saw of chattel slavery, child labor, the sweatshops in the big cities of the land stirred him to profound anger.

The United States, when Swinton was in his twenties, was approaching the critical point in its history that culminated in the

Civil War. In South Carolina he had worked as a compositor in the state printing office. Here he risked his life teaching Blacks to read and write. The gatherings took place in an underground vault.

Through the years, Swinton reacted with indignation to the misery wrought by half a dozen crises: in 1854, 1857, 1860, 1873, 1885 and 1894. After the Civil War had formally destroyed slavery, he perceived that "free men," Black and white working people, were still unfree. And on the 22nd anniversary of the death of John Brown Swinton told an audience in the old Turn Hall in New York what the man from North Elba in the Adirondacks had meant to him:

It needs that we recall the stupendous strength of the old Slavery establishment -- its bulwarks of constitutionalism, legality, politics, mercantilism, capitalism -- and ecclesiasticism; it needs that we recall the power of the interests and passions that environed it, and the subserviency or timidity of even its opponents, with few exceptions, before we can comprehend the influence of the man...who struck through them all, and struck to the heart.

It was a new policy that John Brown brought into play against American slavery -- the policy of meeting it upon its own terms, and its own field, confronting with force a system based upon force, and establishing human rights by the weapons that upheld public wrongs.

In place of the old way of acquiescing in slavery, or compromising with it, or arguing over it, or resisting its extension, he adopted the way of assailing it by the only means that gave any hope of destroying it. John Brown's way was justified by the event -- justified amid flame and smoke by Abraham Lincoln's proclamation of abolition.

* * * * *

It was at about this time that a writer for the Brooklyn Daily Union described the journalist's "large framed full-faced healthy complexion, big brown eyes, a sandy gray moustache, bald, save a rim of gray on the outlying county of an immense cranium; a man who gives expression with rapidity of utterance and eloquence, now and then illuminating his points with a story, an allusion to history, or some passage in the classics."

In a contemporary biography of Swinton, a friend and fellow-printer, Robert Waters, described him as a man "above the middle height, long-haired, broad-browed, with a dark, keen piercing eye, vehement in his denunciation of slavery and fearless in his exposition of daring views and noble aspirations." Waters termed him "a zealous disciple of the abolitionists Phillips, Parker, and Garrison...a great reader of anti-slavery papers and magazines, he was even then noted among his acquaintances for the impetuous ardor with which he assailed slavery. He was in full sympathy with the anti-slavery movement of that time, while most of his comrades sneered at the Negroes and made vulgar jokes about them."

His talk, Waters (a fellow-Scotsman and author of a book on William Cobbett) recalled, "stirred me more than any man I had so far known...He was an ardent admirer of Carlyle, Emerson, Montaigne, and Ruskin." Waters recounts that he left for Europe in 1861 and didn't see Swinton again for seven years. "When I returned," he wrote, "I found Swinton on of the 'leader writers' for the Times, and well known in the literary and political world. He had acquired such a command

of language, such a wealth of imagery, and such knowledge of men and things, present and past, literary, political and scientific, that I thought him by far the best informed and the most brilliant talker I had ever known."

Discussing Waters' book on Swinton in its issue of December 1902, the International Socialist Review noted:

Among the names of those who have made smooth the way for the Socialist movement in America there are few more prominent than that of John Swinton. A man of brilliant intellect, a personal friend of Karl Marx, an able linguist, a fighter in the actual battle of labor, and one of the most prominent journalists of the United States, his was preeminently a life of action and of doing. This life is told by a...friend who makes the man live before us.

Some years later, Eugene V. Debs wrote that "in personal appearance Swinton was tall, well-proportioned and courtly in manner, and one recognized in him at a glance a distinguished personage." His features, the famous Socialist and trade union leader reported, were "strikingly clear-cut, his eyes were keen and piercing, though kindly, his hair snow-white, as were also his moustache and eyebrows, which set off his fine, smooth brow and pallid complexion to perfection."

* * * * *

In his history of the New York Times, Meyer Berger reports that when the paper was young it gave more space to news about science than any other New York newspaper. "John Swinton, a Times editorial writer, handled most of it." To cite one example: Swinton wrote, and

the Times published, three to four columns a day on the meeting of the American Scientists Association in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1860, "and he contributed editorials on science on the side."

When Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species was reprinted by D. Appleton & Co. in New York in March of 1860, the Times ran a 3½-column story on the work of the great scientist. This report has generally been attributed to Swinton.

"Mr. Darwin," the article began, "as the fruit of a quarter-century of patient observation and experiment, throws out, in a book whose title at least by this time has become familiar to the reading public, a series of arguments and inferences so revolutionary as, if established, to necessitate a radical reconstruction of the fundamental doctrines of natural history."

The same article, according to the Times historian, recognized the potential influence of On the Origin of Species, saying: "It is clear that here is one of the most important contributions ever made to philosophic science; and it is behooving on the scientists, in support of his theory, to reconsider the grounds on which their present doctrine of the origin of the species is based."

Swinton's many-sided interests are also touched upon by Frank M. O'Brien, chronicler of another New York newspaper on which he played a major role.

In The Story of the Sun (1883-1928), O'Brien writes that "John Swinton was among the editorial writers who contributed most to

Dana's success. Swinton, whose specialty was Central American affairs and paragraphing, was a Socialist outside the Sun office. He delighted to denounce the 'capitalistic Sun' in a speech at night and tell Mr. Dana [the paper's editor] about it the next morning."

In Henry J. Raymond and the New York Press, August Maverick

described John Swinton as "a fluent and graceful writer." Swinton, he wrote, was a man of "great natural shrewdness and ready wit [who] brought to the profession of journalism a keen and just sense of its requirements. In a greater degree than almost any other member of his profession in this country, he possesses the faculty of pointing a paragraph in such a manner that it becomes as effective as the labored essay of the didactic writer."

Swinton was an activist who did not confine his political interests to the editorial sanctum. On September 6, 1883, he appeared before the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Education, which was holding sessions in New York City. His testimony was prompted by the action of Senator Henry W. Blair, a New Hampshire Republican and chairman of the committee, who proposed that the panel travel to various cities to take testimony on issues involving labor and capital.

The New York Times of September 7, 1883 reported the event in that intimate, quaint journalistic style now out of fashion:

John Swinton's gold-rimmed eye glasses twitched nervously on his nose yesterday morning as he smilingly admitted to Senator Blair, of the Senate

Committee on Education and Labor, that he was an editor. He said that he had been connected with the press since he was 12 years of age. As a newspaperman he had become acquainted with all sorts of questions relating to all sorts of men. He had given the subject of labor much attention and thought, and he had in mind certain measures which, if enacted into laws by Congress, would, he believed, result to the great benefit of the common people.

These measures, reported the Times correspondent, included: the revival of the graduated income tax; the establishment of national boards of health, education and public works; formation of a bureau to gather statistics on the eight-hour question and on working women and children; establishment of postal banks; the enactment of laws "to prevent the holding of large tracts of land in this country by individuals or corporations"; and, finally, public ownership of the railroads, telegraph, coal, iron and gold mines, as well as oil wells.

On one occasion, presiding at a Cooper Union meeting called to protest a New York State Court of Appeals decision nullifying the prevailing wage rate, Swinton told the assemblage, "There have been more born criminals among the men of the bench than among the pirates that ever sailed the high seas."

The reporter for the New York Times wrote that "this sally was greeted with laughter and applause."

"The bench," Swinton went on, "has always been ready to sell out liberty. It supported a king in this country until the revolutionists put the bench where it came from."

Swinton's partisanship on the side of labor was no secret to

his journalistic colleagues, but it was the Tompkins Square unemployed demonstration in 1874 which had first brought him into full public prominence in that role. The panic of 1873 had strangled industry and thousands of New York workers were hurled into unemployment, their families starving.

Appearing before the New York State Legislature on March 25 of that year, Swinton assailed what he termed the "Tompkins Square outrage" and called upon the lawmakers to investigate the situation in New York City. He told the legislators:

In December and January the unemployed and suffering people began to feel that the municipal authorities, and more prosperous classes, must -- in some way -- be made aware of their actual condition, which had been so strangely misrepresented by more than one of the newspapers. There followed a decision to hold a mass demonstration at Tompkins Square, the mayor himself promising to address the meeting.

But now, about ten o'clock, when they were standing around peaceably, waiting for the mayor, platoons of police suddenly appeared, deployed into the square, rushed without warning whatever on the helpless and unarmed multitudes, violently assailed them with their clubs, struck at heads right and left, wounded many, dragged off some thirty or forty who were flung into station-houses not unlike the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Gentlemen, is not this a horrible spectacle in a civilized country and city? Do you know of anything like it in the modern experience of any other Christian region of the world?

The editorial funks and intellectual policemen have roused prejudices against these their victims by saying they were Communists, in league with the impending earthquake. Gentlemen, be not alarmed by mysterious words, and let not the epithet "Communist" stir up the same sort of

hydrophobia that the epithet "Abolitionist" once did. Suppose the ideas of these people were the sort which editors and policemen call "Communistic;" does anyone suppose the thing can be scribbled out of their hearts or clubbed out of their heads?

The authorities were not quelling a riot, for there was no riot, and not a man had raised a finger when the police unexpectedly sprang to the assault. They were not dispersing a mob, for this was not a mob, but a peaceable gathering under regular authority, few among them being aware that the papers of that morning had published a hastily-issued prohibitory order. Only two or three of the workingmen offered even the slightest resistance to the onslaught, though it must have been hard for some of them, under the circumstances, to refrain from defending their lives. None of the victims were actually clubbed or trampled to death, but many were shockingly wounded. No charges could be maintained against the parties arrested, and all of them, with one exception, were released after various periods of unjustifiable incarceration.

At the conclusion of his indictment against the New York City authorities and their police, Swinton proposed that "the Police Board which perpetrated these cruel, flagrant and horrible outrages against the unemployed and suffering workmen of New York" be abolished; that instead, a new board be created, to be elected by popular suffrage.

During major strikes on the railroads and in other industries in the seventies, Swinton again addressed a huge demonstration in Tompkins Square. A Contemporary account says that it was a perilous time for oratory, his friends firmly believing that he was endangering his life and urged him to keep away from the meeting. Nonetheless, he appeared and began his address with these words: "With 8,000 rifles and 1,200 clubs drawn upon me..." This time there was no interference by the police.

In the fall of that year Swinton ran for mayor of New York on the Industrial Party ticket. Three years later, as the candidate of the Progressive Labor Party for state senator, he waged a vigorous campaign.

Swinton was not alone in his denunciation of contemporary outrages. Two other former printers, William Dean Howells and Mark Twain, expressed themselves emphatically on the issues of the day.

Howells, who in 1871 assumed the editorship of the Atlantic Monthly -- then the most influential literary journal in America -- published articles on the causes of the depression, civil service reform, immigration, feminism and the rights of women.

"An article on 'Children's Labor,'" writes Robert Lee Hough in The Quiet Rebel, "is particularly arresting in its description of the evils of child labor...."

Later, in December, 1880, Howells accepted for publication "The Story of a Great Monopoly," Henry Demarest Lloyd's expose of the ruthless practices of the Standard Oil Company, and a forerunner of the muckraking articles by Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, Lincoln Steffens and John Reed.

Some time afterward, Howells wrote Mark Twain that labor was at last educating itself, that workers would begin to win strikes soon, and that the public was being betrayed by the press. Commenting on two recent articles by the celebrated author, one of them on the Knights of Labor, Howells had written on April 5, 1888:

My dear Clemens:

I have read your two essays with thrills almost amounting to yells of satisfaction. It is about the best thing yet said on the subject; but it is strange that you can't get a single newspaper to face the facts of the situation. Here the fools are now all shouting because the Knights of Labor have revenged themselves on the Engineers, and the C. B. and Q. strike is a failure. No one notices how labor has educated itself; no one perceives that next time there won't be any revenge or any failure! If ever a public was betrayed by its press, it's ours. No man could safely make himself heard in behalf of the strikers any more than for the anarchists."

The "anarchists" were the Haymarket martyrs. (As a result of their struggle for the eight-hour day, seven had been convicted; two were given long prison sentences, one committed suicide, and four were hanged on November 11, 1887). In a letter to his sister Howells had characterized the trial "as an atrocious piece of frenzy and cruelty, for which we must stand ashamed forever before history." Earlier in the same letter he said: "Elinor [Mrs. Howells] and I both no longer care for the world's life and would like to be settled down very humbly and simply, where we could be socially identified with the principles of progress and sympathy for the struggling masses."

Howells, who was one of America's leading literary figures, "was deeply stirred by the case," writes Alan Calmer in his Labor Agitator: The Story of Albert R. Parsons. "Although he feared his reputation and livelihood would be jeopardized, he interceded in their behalf."

The critical sentiments expressed by Howells found an echo

from time to time, even in academic circles. Recalling that period in his autobiography, Professor Richard T. Ely of the University of Wisconsin, and one of the first labor economists in the United States, observed:

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the American people witnessed a crisis in the labor movement. It was marked by a deep stirring of the masses -- not a local stirring, not merely a national stirring, but an international, world-wide stirring of the masses. The manner of producing material goods was examined critically and pronounced faulty. The distribution of these goods among the various members of the social organism was also critically examined and pronounced iniquitous. Proposals were made for new modes of production and distribution of economic goods. The masses desired changes not merely in surface phenomena, but in the very foundation of the social order.

* * * * *

A major event in Swinton's life, and one to which he would make frequent reference, was his meeting with Karl Marx in August, 1880, at the seaside resort of Ramsgate, in England. The interview appeared on page 1 of the New York Sun on September 6, 1880, and was later published in "Joh Swinton's Travels: Current Views and Notes of Forty Days in France and England."

Swinton's impressions of the founder of scientific Socialism -- "one of the most remarkable men of the day" -- are fascinating for the intimate glimpses one gets of Marx and his immediate family.* "A man without desire for fame, caring nothing for the fanfaronade of life or the pretense of power; without haste and without

* For full text of this interview see Appendix.

rest, a man of strong, broad elevated mind, full of far-reaching projects, logical methods and practical aims, he has stood and yet stands behind more of the earthquakes which have convulsed nations and destroyed thrones, and do now menace and appall crowned heads and established frauds, than any other man in Europe, not excepting Joseph Mazzini himself."

That Swinton could conceive the impact of Marx's philosophy on the world, and view the man and his work with exaltation, is a tribute not only to his intellectual capacities, but to his scale of values.

Swinton's friend and biographer, Robert Waters, reports a conversation with Swinton about Marx, and quotes him as saying: "I met him in London, and I consider him one of the noblest and most logical thinkers I ever knew.... When I became an editor and saw how fortunes were made by a turn of the hand, by secret combinations of capitalists, and how this tended to impoverish the community, I began to see that the whole thing was wrong and that the entire system ought to be changed."

Swinton went on to say, according to Waters: "I made the acquaintance of Wendell Phillips and found that he, too, had come to similar conclusions. He believed that the capitalist system was steadily undermining the world...and bringing his countrymen into a condition quite as wretched as that of the Negro slaves; and he vehemently condemned it."

Not long after his meeting with Marx in England, Swinton

received from him a copy of the French edition of Capital and a letter, dated November 4, 1880, thanking him "for your friendly article in the Sun," a reference to the Ramsgate interview. (The letter was written in English.)

After reporting that "political interest centers here at present on the Irish 'Land Question'," Marx told Swinton of the persecutions resulting from the Bismarckian Anti-Socialist law. "Liebknecht has to enter prison for six months," Marx wrote, adding: "The Anti-Socialist Law having failed to overthrow or even to weaken the German Social-Democratic organization, Bismarck [the German chancellor] clings more desperately to his panacea, and fancies that it must work, if only applied on a larger scale."

"The Anti-Socialist Law, though it could not break and never will break our organization, does impose pecuniary sacrifices almost impossible to bear. To support the families ruined by the police, to keep alive the few papers left to us. to keep up the necessary communications by secret messengers, to fight the battle on the whole line-- all this requires money. We are nearly exhausted and forced to appeal to our friends and sympathizers in other countries."

Assuring Swinton that "we here in London, Paris, etc., will do our best," Marx called upon the American for assistance. "I believe that a man of your influence," he wrote, "might organize a subscription in the United States." He added that, "Even if the monetary result were not important, denunciations of Bismarck's new coup d'état in public meetings held by you, reported in the American press,

reproduced on the other side of the Atlantic, would sorely hit the Pomeranian hobereau [country squire] and be welcomed by all the Socialists of Europe." Marx suggested that Swinton get in touch with F. A. Sorge, the general secretary of the First International, who lived at that time in Hoboken, New Jersey, for further details.

In the same letter -- recalling the time they met in England -- Marx wrote: "My youngest daughter [Eleanor] -- who was not at Ramsgate -- tells me she has cut my portrait from the copy of Capital I sent you, on the pretext that it was a mere caricature. Well, I shall make up for it by a photogram to be taken on the first fine day.

"Mrs. Marx and the whole family send you their best wishes."

A second letter dated June 2, 1881 (also written in English) was brought by a refugee from tsarist persecution, Leo Hartmann, whom Marx recommended to Swinton's attention.

"I send you through him a photogram of mine; it is rather bad, but the only one left to me," Marx wrote. Commenting on Henry George's Progress and Poverty, he observed: "I consider it as a last attempt to save the capitalistic regime. Of course, this is not the meaning of the author, but the older disciples of Ricardo -- the radical ones -- fancied already that by the public appropriation of the rent of land everything would be righted. I have referred to this doctrine in the Misère de la Philosophie [The Poverty of Philosophy, published in 1847] against Proudhon.

"Mrs. Marx sends you her best compliments. Unfortunately, her illness assumes more and more a fatal character."

In a letter to Sorge dated November 5, 1880, Marx wrote that "as a result of Bismarck's new state-of-siege decrees and the persecution of our party organs, it is absolutely necessary to raise money for the party. I have therefore written to John Swinton (for a well-meaning bourgeois is best suited for this purpose), and told him to apply to you for detailed information regarding German conditions."

Swinton's role in organizing the movement against Bismarck's anti-Socialist law in the United States is illuminated in a recent article by Philip S. Foner in the International Review of Social History.

Referring to Marx's letter for financial assistance, Foner writes:

There is no evidence either that Swinton ever replied to Marx, or that he and Sorge ever contacted each other. But Sorge did inform Marx that he had learned that Swinton had revealed that he had received a letter from Marx, but had said he could do nothing in the matter other than contribute about \$100 personally to the cause. . . . Actually, while Marx did not mention it, Bismarck's anti-Socialist policy had, from its very inception, aroused considerable indignation in this country from Socialists, non-Socialist workers, and liberal intellectuals. It took the form of protest meetings and the raising of funds for the relief of the victims of Bismarckism. Swinton, himself, was a leading figure in these protests.

As an example of this activity, Foner cites a meeting held in Chickering Hall, in New York City, where Swinton not only presided, but delivered the main address. After the management had agreed to rent its facilities, Swinton observed, that Socialists "had been routed out of First Avenue, clubbed out of Tompkins Square, and subjected to the most infamous outrages in the Democratic regions of the East Side, and now they propose to establish their headquarters in the avenue of the aristocracy."

Shortly after Marx's death a memorial meeting was held in Cooper Union, New York, on March 20, 1883, where all nationalities were represented, both on the platform and in the audience, and speeches were made in several languages.

According to Foner, the meeting was the "outstanding memorial event held anywhere in the world in the weeks immediately following Marx's death." Because of his celebrated interview with Marx, and the correspondence that followed, it was most appropriate that Swinton be one of the speakers at the memorial meeting.

The New York Sun of March 21, 1883, headlined the event: "Tributes to Karl Marx"--"A Great International Memorial Meeting of Workingmen"--"Thousands Turned Away from the Doors of Cooper Union"--"Addresses in English, German, Russian, Bohemian and French." The newspaper reported that "if the great hall of Cooper Union had been twice as large as it is, it could not have held the vast throng of workingmen who gathered last evening to do honor to the memory of Dr. Karl Marx."

Introduced to loud applause, John Swinton opened his speech with these words: "It is to make requiem for Karl Marx, who has just left the world, that we are here tonight." Referring to his interview with Marx three years earlier, Swinton declared that the author of Capital was "an observer of American action, and his remarks upon some of the formative and substantive forces of American life were full of suggestiveness." Swinton summed up his estimate of Marx:

First -- Karl Marx was a man of lofty mind, true

and free, equipped with all the knowledge of the times.

Secondly -- It was by his moral nature, his generous and radiant qualities, his faith in right and love of man, that his mind was controlled.

Thirdly -- Karl Marx did extraordinary work in the world, and when the history of the last forty years is revealed, and the movements of which he was a promoter, and which are now in progress throughout Europe are brought to their consummation, the depth and scope of his work will be known.

Fourthly -- Karl Marx proclaimed fruitful ideas to mankind -- the comprehensive ideas of unity and self-help incarnated in the International Association that have become watchwords of the world's workers; the creative ideas upon political economy, social forces, industrial cooperation and public law that are found in his Capital, and the other great underlying ideas of the Revolution whose star will soon appear over Europe.

Fifthly -- Karl Marx gave up his whole life for the disinherited, neglecting the personal ends he might have subserved and the prizes he might have won, rendering himself liable to the hostility of power, by which he was made an outlaw.

Finally, in giving all to mankind, Karl Marx gave that which was more than aught else when he gave himself.

* * * * *

Convinced that the true story of labor did not reach working people, Swinton in the mid-Eighties launched his own weekly, John

Swinton's Paper. A statement of principles set forth its objectives:

1. Boldly upholding the rights of Man in the American Way.
2. Battling against the Accumulated Wrongs of Society and Industry.

3. Striving for the Organization and Interests of Working men and giving the news of the Trades and Unions.
4. Uniting the Political Forces, searching for a common platform, and giving the news of all the Young Bodies in the field.
5. Warning the American people against the treasonable and crushing schemes of Millionaires, Monopolists and Plutocrats, and against the coming Billionaire whose shadow is now looming up.
6. Looking toward better times of fair play and Public Welfare.

Typical headlines: "Millionaire Dodgers -- Must Be Forced to Pay Their Share of Taxes; Put an End to the Swindling and Perjury of the Giants Who Devour Us; The Working Woman: 100,000 of Them Struggling Through Life in This City."

A headline in the issue of February 2, 1885, strikes a contemporary note: "England and Ireland: Scope of the New Struggle Against Landlordism."

Editorials were pithy. News dispatches were brisk. There were also advertisements, but not from Big Business. Most were from booksellers and other small tradesmen.

Regular departments included "Trade Unions in the City" and "Meetings of the Unions." One issue carried a story by a staff writer titled, "Two Nights in Poe's Room in Fordham," a genial essay on William Dean Howells, and a list of recommended books and magazines. Another issue contained a number of poems and a sketch by Émile Zola.

The August 31, 1884, issue of the paper announced that "we

have made arrangements with Mrs. Eleanor Marx Aveling, the daughter of the late Karl Marx, for a series of letters from London. We shall next week give the first of them, which has just come to hand, and which contains some interesting news about the books left by her distinguished father, now under preparation for the publisher in London."

And, indeed, the following issue of John Swinton's Paper (September 7, 1884) featured a full column of correspondence from Eleanor Aveling Marx. It was headlined "Karl Marx's Daughter -- The Second Volume of Her Father's Great Work Left Complete -- His Life-Long Toil." From London, Eleanor Marx wrote:

Not only Socialists, but all students of political economy, are looking forward with interest and impatience to the publication in English of Karl Marx's Das Kapital. A translation is now in progress of which, at some future date, I shall be glad to give full details. At present I can only say that the work is in able and loving hands and that it probably will appear in two volumes by next Spring....

The two greatest thinkers of the age -- Charles Darwin and Karl Marx -- who had so many qualities in common -- were both special examples of the capacity of genius for taking infinite pains. Both of these men will be remembered for their germinal discoveries that revolutionized natural science and the science of political economy -- the one leading the quiet life of the scientific discoverer; the other the stormy life of the revolutionist, but both always true to themselves and to their work.

I like to remember -- I do not think it has ever before been noted -- that The Origin of Species and the Kritik der Politischen Économie (that contains the germs of the theories more fully developed in Das Kapital), were both given to the world in 1859....

Five weeks later (October 12, 1884) Swinton published another dispatch from Eleanor Marx. The item was headlined "Marx's Daughter -- Half a Million Men Idle in England; As Many Half-Idle." In her report, datelined London, she wrote: "Besides some half million laborers entirely out of work (in England alone), at least 500,000 men are on half time, and those who know what starvation wages of 'full time' mean, will readily understand that we are face to face with an immense crisis."

Articles and editorials in John Swinton's Paper denounced low wages, discriminatory pay for women workers, the high cost of living, injunction-granting judges, and members of Congress who opposed a bill calling for the establishment of a bureau of labor standards. A special Washington correspondent wrote a story headlined: "Bulwark of Capital -- The Millionaires Who Rule the Senate -- Living Sketches of Dried Specimens."

Dispatches from industrial centers described "the bitter lot of labor" in the mills and mines. And the editor demanded: "If Villard cannot afford the wages paid to his hands on the Northern Pacific Railroad, how can he afford to go on with the building of his million-dollar palace in this city? If Cyrus W. Field cannot afford to pay his janitors more than \$4 a week, how can he afford to feast all the British aristocracy?"

John Swinton's Paper gave considerable attention to the conditions of women and children. There were not only editorials and special correspondence, but letters from workers direct from the shops.

In the issue of March 8, 1885, a story was headlined, "Little

Mill Slaves -- New Child Labor Bill in the New York State Legislature -- Steps Proposed to Modify the Satanic System Under Which Thousands of Children Are Murdered Every Year." Swinton's Albany correspondent reported that the measure would apply to places "where machinery propelled by steam, water or other mechanical power is used." Section 1 of the proposed bill stipulated that no one under 21 "shall be employed for more than ten hours a day."

Under a headline, "A Woman and Her Sisters," a garment worker told about "a certain suit company on 14th Street" (in New York City). "Previous to June," she reported, "the girls had received from 90 cents to \$1.50 for an entire suit, and 65 cents for ladies' wrappers. The workers are often asked, 'Why don't you refuse such prices?' Because they [the employers] would only say to us: 'Go! if you are not satisfied.'"

An account from another worker: "The shop in which I work employs sometimes as many as 100 girls, but as 'business is dull,' just now we have no more than 30 at work. Our employer and her sister treat us like dogs....'What do you mean by such work as this, Miss ---?' We have all countries represented: about half the girls are Germans; about a quarter Irish or Irish-American, and the rest are 'Ninth Warders,' that means Americans."

In an editorial (November 1, 1885), Swinton praised the New York Central Labor Union for bringing before the public "some of the more grievous wrongs of the women -- mostly young women." The editorial went on to say that "it is noble work that has been undertaken

by the Central Labor Union of this city for protecting the working women of the various trades against the countless wrongs to which they are subject under our cruel industrial system."

A page 1 dispatch from Pittsburgh on September 14, 1884, was headlined "Brave Women of the Mines." It described a meeting of miners' wives and their resolve to "stand by their husbands" who had been jailed for strike activities.

Swinton's concern for working women is also attested to in Foner's History of American Labor, which describes a testimonial dinner meeting arranged for three women pickets from Yonkers who had been arrested. The entire labor movement of New York City had joined in this tribute, and John Swinton "had been designated to present them with medals in honor of their militancy and courage."

A direct question on the right of women was put to Swinton by a reader from Columbus, Ohio, in the issue of November 4, 1886. Addressing her letter "To the Editor," she wrote: "In my wishes of good speed for your success in establishing 'the rights of man in the American way' [the first point in the statement of principles of John Swinton's Paper], I with others wish to know if women are to be placed upon your platform with equal rights and privileges, and to have fair play in the better time that your faithful labor must bring."

Swinton replied: "Most assuredly. When we speak of the rights of men, those of women are implied every time, truly and fully -- her right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.... In the great productive industries into which millions of women are now being

driven, the Knights of Labor are steadily striving to secure the enforcement of the following great principle of their platform: 'To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work.' This is not a mere empty demand, such as might be put out by double-faced politicians; it is meant to take practical shape.

"Women are not only invited to membership in the Knights of Labor, but they are eligible to all offices of the Order.

"Fair play for woman every time!"

Swinton's sensitivity to the problems of the Black workman of his time is revealed in an editorial November 28, 1886, which he titled "A Mistake of Colored Men." A correspondent in Missouri, he wrote, had told of miners who were "supplanted by colored men," as so strikebreakers. Commenting on this incident, Swinton wrote that impoverished Negroes "were transferred from the South by the corporation," and compared it to the contract system of imported labor.

Swinton added: "It is hard to find fault with the poor colored men for the part they have taken in these inroads; but for the capitalists who have brought them to the North, there should be nothing short of positive public condemnation. In the country districts of the South, the Negro laborers are held in a condition akin to slavery. They are paid so little wages, receive so little cash after their fifty or seventy-five cents a day suffers from the 'pluck me' system [company stores], that they are easily lured to the North at wages disgustingly inadequate for white workingmen. The imposition on the Negroes is systematically carried out." Swinton concluded his editorial

by denouncing the system of convict labor in the South, where Negroes are sentenced to "10 and 20 years for petty crimes" for which whites would not even be charged.

Swinton, unfortunately, did not display the same keen sympathies on the issue of Chinese immigration. His views on the subject were first presented in the New York Tribune of June 30, 1870. What precipitated this article was the importation in that year of Chinese to work in a shoe factory in North Adams, Massachusetts. This action was viewed as a threat to unionism and to the movement for the eight-hour day.

According to Dr. Marc Ross, who has made a perceptive study of the subject, Swinton's opposition to the importation of Chinese laborers "seems to have been impelled more by desire to protect American civilization from the intrusion of an alien and unassimilable population than by the implications of their importation for the conditions of labor of American workers."

"There is reason to dread the infusion and transfusion of the Chinese, Mongolian or Yellow race with the white American race," Swinton had written in The New Issue: The Chinese-American Question, first published in 1870. And in his own paper he had proclaimed: "The Chinese must go; no more mongolization in our country."

Although Swinton argued that an influx of Chinese laborers would depress the wages of native workingmen, his language was undeniable racist; in this he failed to rise above his times and above the makers of American policy, who had first denigrated the common

humanity of the enslaved Blacks, then the freed "people of color."

* * * * *

On August 7, 1887, there appeared this announcement in Swinton's publication: "For almost four years, at a heavy expense to myself, for every week of each year, I have edited and published John Swinton's Paper. My means are no longer sufficient to bear any further strain.... I have sunk tens of thousands of dollars -- all of it out of my own pocket. In the final number, a fortnight hence, I shall give a review of the past and present for the information of all friends -- to whom I shall then bid Farewell!"

Unexpired subscriptions would be credited to another paper, Swinton explained, and any sums due advertisers who had paid in advance would be sent back at once.

The final issue of John Swinton's Paper, on August 21, 1887, carried this valedictory:

FAREWELL!
To my many faithful friends and sturdy fellow workers all over this broad land, who have stood by me in this paper, aiding the work it was founded to promote, or cherishing the principles which it has steadily proclaimed --- I now bid FAREWELL.

John Swinton

Two years earlier Swinton had indicated some of the hardships he had faced as a labor editor when he said that "there are American wage workers, descended from Revolutionary sires, who dare not take this paper for fear of the employers. Several men think it is safer

to get the paper in post-offices distant from their homes. To be caught with it in some of the slave mills of New England would cost a man as much as his wages are worth."

One day someone who asked Swinton if he made money on his paper got this reply: "Did you ever hear of Washington, or Luther, or Garrison, making money by their work? No, sir; only mercenaries live to make money."

Nevertheless, he had to have cash to operate. After his paper had been in existence for 16 months, he made a special appeal to his readers. Evidently they responded, for Swinton continued publication. The paper published for two more years with the help of its readers, but finally it had to surrender. Swinton had put \$40,000 of his personal savings into the venture. Professor Selig Perlman, labor historian at the University of Wisconsin, called John Swinton's Paper "the best labor paper printed in the country's history."

Eugene V. Debs concurred. Describing the publication as "a paper of remarkable ability and force," Debs wrote that "it had to succumb at last." It was "a menace to Wall Street and the monied interests, and they finally succeeded in forcing it to the wall."

* * * * *

On the basis of his experience as a journalist, Swinton had harsh words for the newspaper business.

"Journalism, once a profession, and then a trade, is now a crime," he once observed. Upton Sinclair, in his famous Cry for

Justice: An Anthology of Social Protest (1915), described Swinton as "one of American's boldest and most beloved journalists," and reported that Swinton, tendered a banquet by his fellow editors, startled them by this response to a "toast" to "the independent" press: "There is no such thing in America as an 'independent' press, unless it is in the country towns. There's not one of you who would dare write his honest opinions, and if you did you know beforehand that it would never appear in print."

In recalling Swinton's comments, Sinclair wrote: "I speak, not in my own voice, but in that of an old-time journalist, venerated in his day, John Swinton."

At least one American student of Swinton has expressed skepticism about the authenticity of the quotation. Dr. Marc Ross cites an "investigation" as reported in the April, 1960, Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

The Bulletin quoted Chester M. Lewis, director of archives of the New York Times, as stating that he had been unable to locate the original source of the remarks.

In response to a query from Lewis, Sinclair had declared: "That Swinton quote haunted me for forty years. It was a sort of classic in the Socialist movement. I had seen it often and took it for granted...." (Emphasis added -- S.G.) Sinclair added that he would not use the quotation in future editions, according to Lewis.

Not only had Sinclair used the Swinton quote in his Cry for Justice, (1915), but he included it in his famous exposé of the

American press, The Brass Check (1920), and in successive editions.

* * * * *

A featured speaker at the 1892 convention of the American Federation of Labor in Philadelphia, Swinton spoke of the "battalions that fought this year at Homestead, Buffalo and Coeur d'Alene." He urged the delegates to find some way of "unifying the industrial and productive elements of the country for the defense against dangers that are all too obvious," asking urgently: "Can we not agree upon some one thing while differing upon other things?" He suggested that "it is time for the struggling working people of the eastern states to link arms with the advancing farmers of the resurgent west."

At workers' gatherings Swinton was generally among the speakers on the platform. However, one night in the fall of 1894 he was in the audience at Cooper Union, in New York, when Eugene V. Debs, who had gained fame as a result of the Pullman strike, was the principal speaker.

Thirty-four years earlier, Swinton had listened to another gaunt man from the West speaking from the same platform. He was moved to make the observation that "Debs in Cooper Union reminded me of Lincoln there. As Lincoln, of Illinois, became an efficient agent for freedom, so, perchance, might Debs of Indiana become in the impending conflict for the liberation of labor."

Debs was to write in 1918 that Swinton, "who might have had unlimited wealth and power and fame," died in poverty and almost in obscurity, because he was truly great and uncompromisingly honest,

scorning to barter his principles and convictions for...a life-lease of pampered self-indulgence to soften his brain, eat out his heart, and putrefy his soul."

Swinton had been a staunch supporter of the Pullman strike of 1894, which Debs had led and for which he was imprisoned. Four years later they became acquainted. The respect and affection that existed between them was to be profound. Swinton's speeches, said Debs, were "scholarly in thought, classical in composition, and contain some of the most thrilling passages to be found in American oratory."

John Swinton, like his friend Wendell Phillips, he said, "understood the labor question in its deeper significance and wider aspects; he had a clear grasp of its fundamental principles and its international scope and character, and he knew that the labor movement was revolutionary and that its mission of emancipating the working class from wage slavery could be accomplished only by destroying the system and reorganizing society upon a new economic foundation.... Both Marx and Swinton are gone, but their work remains and the heroic, unselfish examples they set will be a perpetual inspiration to the world."

Describing the many warm letters he had received from Swinton, Debs said that they were "filled with kindnesses, with loyalty and greetings and good cheer." In the midst of the Pullman strike, when Debs was facing prison, Swinton had written: "You are waging a Napoleonic battle amidst the admiration of millions. Be strong, Brother Debs!"

In a later letter (June 30, 1897), Swinton wrote Debs that "the strength of your faith; the liveliness of your hopes; the persistency of your valor, the breadth of your thought, and the energy of your genius fill me with admiration. These things belong to that kind of Americanism which is ever regenerative." He received this letter, Debs recounts, after Swinton learned that "the railroad managers had sworn that the American Railway Union should not be organized and their detectives were dogging my footsteps by day and night."

When he visited New York, Debs recalled, "the little chats we had together were occasions of special enjoyment and delight to me. He [Swinton] had the reputation of being somewhat brusque in manner, but I never found him so. On the contrary, he was always genial as sunshine to me. At his home he was the very soul of hospitality. He lived modestly with his wife, whom he addressed as 'angel' and in whom he had a most sympathetic and helpful companion in all his arduous labors and disappointing experiences."

Like many radicals of the time, Debs was immensely impressed with Swinton's interview with Karl Marx. "He visited Karl Marx," Debs wrote, "and it may readily be imagined that these two great revolutionary souls found genial companionship in each other."

Swinton and Marx saw "struggle" ahead, Debs wrote, referring to the famous Ramsgate interview. Writing during World War I, the Socialist leader declared that "the years which have followed have amply vindicated their prescience. Struggle there has been over all the face of the earth, increasing steadily in violence and intensity

until today the whole of humanity seems seized with a madness for bloodshed and destruction that threatens an upheaval wide as the world and unparalleled in world's history."

A Debs-like spirit animates Swinton's Striking for Life: Labor's Side of the Labor Question. In this stirring volume, Swinton wrote that "it is most certainly an unsatisfactory and unpromising outlook under the existing state of things. . . . It must be possible for the American people to make up their mind that these mighty agencies -- new forces and new appliances of inventive skill -- shall be used for public advantage rather than for private enrichment; for the welfare of the community, rather than for its impoverishment."

* * * * *

An equally good friend had been Walt Whitman. And the bond between Swinton and the poet became even closer when together they visited the Civil War wounded. Swinton recalled:

...I saw him [Whitman] time and again, in the Washington hospitals, or wending his way there with a bag and basket or haversack on his arm, and the strength of beneficence suffusing his face. His devotion surpassed the devotion of woman. It would take a volume to tell of his kindness, tenderness, and thoughtfulness.

Never shall I forget one night when I accompanied him on his rounds through a hospital, filled with those wounded young Americans whose heroism he has sung in deathless numbers. There were three rows of cots, and each cot bore its man. When he appeared, in passing along, there was a smile of affection, and welcome on every face, however wan, and his presence seemed to light up the place as it might be lit by the presence of the Son of Love. From cot to cot they called him often in tremulous tones or in whispers; they embraced him, they

touched his hand, they gazed at him. To one he gave a few words of cheer, for another he wrote a letter home, to others he gave an orange, a few comfits, a cigar, a pipe and tobacco, a sheet of paper or a postage stamp, all of which and many other things were in his capacious haversack.

From another he would receive a dying message for mother, wife, or sweetheart; for another he would promise to go on an errand; to another, some special friend, very low, he would give a manly farewell kiss. He did the things for them which no nurse or doctor could do, and he seemed to leave a benediction at every cot as he passed along. The lights had gleamed for hours in the hospital that night before he left it, and as he took his way towards the door, you could hear the voice of many a stricken hero calling, "Walt, Walt, Walt, come again! come again!"

His basket and stores, filled with all sorts of odds and ends for the men, had been emptied. He had really little to give, but it seemed to me as though he gave more than other men.

* * * * *

In a letter to Whitman Swinton had expressed his enthusiasm for Leaves of Grass. "My dear and great Walt," he wrote, "I want to see you that I may get another copy of the Leaves and subscribe an X for expense of publication. I am profoundly impressed with the great humanity, or genius, that expressed itself through you....I could convey no idea to you how it affects my soul. It is more to me than all other books and poetry."

A passionate admirer of Whitman's writings, Swinton helped to bring his books to the attention of the public. On October 1, 1868, for example, the following item appeared in the "Minor Topics" column which Swinton conducted in the New York Times:

"With the bright crispy Autumn weather Walt Whitman again makes his appearance on the sidewalks of Broadway. His large, massive personality -- his grave and prophetic, yet free and manly appearance -- his insouciance of manner and movement -- his easy and negligent, yet clean and wholesome dress -- to make up a figure of an individuality that attracts the attention of every passer-by."

The article then informed readers of the growth of Whitman's reputation abroad. "Rossetti has classed him with Homer and one or two other great poetic geniuses of the world." Moreover, the famous German poet Freiligrath [friend of Karl Marx] was planning to translate Leaves of Grass. The item concluded with the announcement of the forthcoming publication of "a small work in prose," Democratic Vistas.

Swinton did not confine himself to publicizing Whitman's writings; he helped promote them in a most practical way, sending him printed forms for potential purchasers of books, editions of which were sold by the poet by subscription for some twenty years.

In a note "to various friends," Whitman wrote that "in a letter from my friend John Swinton, he speaks of your kind desire to subscribe for some copies....I send you enclosed slips. Of course I should be happy to furnish you with any copies. I am still jogging along here in the two-thirds ill, one-third well condition of these late years."

Swinton often expressed the view that labor's progress was slow. Whitman's close friend, Horace Traubel, in his With Walt Whitman in Camden, recorded that "Swinton sometimes seems to get in the dumps

awful...is down in the mouth about the tardiness of the people to respond to the appeal of the economic radicals." And Traubel commented, "The people will come along in their own time -- yes, and take their time."

Chatting with Whitman one day in April, 1888, Horace Traubel mentioned Swinton. "John, you know," Walt said, "is stormy, tempestuous -- raises a hell of a row over things -- yet underneath all is nothing that is not noble, sweet, sane." These remarks were prompted by the turning up of a letter Swinton had written him about four years earlier, described by Whitman as "almost like a love letter," but not unusual in the fervid rhetoric of the day.

Swinton had written:

My beloved Walt -- I have read the sublime poem of the Universal once and again, and yet again -- seeing it in the Graphic, Post, Mail, World, and many other papers. It is sublime. It raised my mind to its own sublimity. It seems to me the sublimest of all your poems. I cannot help reading it every once of a while. I return to it as a fountain of joy.

My beloved Walt. You know how I have worshipped you, without change or cessation, for twenty years. While my soul exists, that worship must be ever new.

It was perhaps the very day of the publication of the first edition of the Leaves of Grass that I saw a copy of it at a newspaper stand in Fulton Street, Brooklyn. I got it, looked into it with wonder, and felt that here was something that touched the depths of my humanity. Since then you have grown before me, grown around me, and grown into me.

I expected certainly to go down to Camden last fall to see you. But something prevented. And, in time

I saw in the papers that you had recovered. The New Year took me into a new field of action among the miseries. Oh, what scenes of human horror were to be found in this city last winter. I cannot tell you how much I was engaged, or all I did for three months. I must wait till I see you to tell you about these things. I have been going toward social radicalism of late years...Now I would like to see you, in order to temper my heart, and expand my narrowness.

How absurd it is to suppose that there is any ailment in the brain of a man who can generate the poem of the Universal. I would parody Lincoln and say that such kind of ailment ought to spread.

My beloved Walt. Tell me if you would like me to come to see you, and perhaps I can do so within a few weeks.

Traubel reports: "I quoted W. that phrase from Swinton's letter, 'I have been going toward social radicalism of late years.' 'Yes,' said W., 'I remember it. Are we not all going that way or already gone?'"

* * * * *

It was Swinton who first brought Leaves of Grass to the attention of Russian readers via the circuitous route of a lecture on American literature to a German society in New York City, and later before the Philosophical Society of Williamsburg, in Brooklyn. A translation of the lecture later appeared in Zagranichny Vestnik (Foreign Herald), in 1882.

Calling his attention to the article, Swinton wrote Whitman: "Now I have the magazine and you have a very heavy puff in the organ which is studied by all the powerful and intellectual classes of Russia."

Traubel reports that Whitman asked him to read the letter

aloud, and when he had finished the poet said: "That has a real sound. It seems to take me way off into a strange country, and set me down there....I'm as much for all countries as for one and I suppose I am so that I should not feel like an alien even over in that great Tartar Empire."

* * * * *

Despite his intense admiration for Marx, Swinton was not a scientific Socialist. His outlook was close to that of the utopian Socialists of the time. His ardor was all for labor's cause, his journalistic talents were dedicated to working people. His eyes had been opened to some of the evils of American capitalist society; his passionate reaction to these evils made him a forerunner of the "muck-rakers" of the next generation.

Viewing his life, work and development in their totality, John Swinton merits greater recognition than has so far been accorded him. He was an outstanding American who not only exposed and fought the venality of the prevailing social system but saw the need and had the hope for a far more humanistic social order.

#

John Swinton's Interview with Karl Marx

(August, 1880) *

One of the most remarkable men of the day, who has played an inscrutable but puissant part in the revolutionary politics of the past 40 years, is Karl Marx. A man without desire for show or fame, caring nothing for the fanfaronade of life or the pretense of power, without haste and without rest, a man of strong, broad, elevated mind, full of far-reaching projects, logical methods and practical aims, he has stood and yet stands behind more of the earthquakes which have convulsed nations and destroyed thrones, and do now menace and appall crowned heads and established frauds, than any other man in Europe, not excepting Joseph Mazzini himself.

The student of Berlin, the critic of Hegelianism, the editor of papers and the old-time correspondent of the New York Tribune, he showed his qualities and his spirit; the founder and master spirit of the once dreaded International, and the author of Capital, he has been expelled from half the countries of Europe, proscribed in nearly all of them, and for 30 years past has found refuge in London. He was at Ramsgate, the great seashore resort of the Londoners, while I was in London, and there I found him in his cottage, with his family of two generations. The saintly-faced, sweet-voiced, graceful woman of suavity, who welcomed me at the door, was evidently the mistress of the house and the wife of Karl Marx. And is this massive-headed, generous featured, courtly, kindly man of 60, with the bushy masses of long, revelling gray hair, Karl Marx?

His dialogue reminded me of that of Socrates -- so free, so sweeping, so creative, so incisive, so genuine -- with its sardonic touches, its gleams of humor, and its sportive merriment. He spoke of the political forces and popular movements of the various countries of Europe -- the vast current of the spirit of Russia, the motions of the German mind, the action of France, the immobility of England. He spoke hopefully of Russia, philosophically of Germany, cheerfully of France, and somberly of England -- referring

* New York Sun, September 6, 1880; reprinted in John Swinton's Travels: Current Views and Notes of Forty Days in France & England.

contemptuously to the "atomistic reforms" over which the Liberals of the British Parliament spend their time. Surveying the European world, country after country, indicating the features and the developments and the personages of the surface and under the surface, he showed that things were working toward ends which will assuredly be realized. I was often surprised as he spoke. It was evident that this man, of whom so little is seen or heard, is deep in the times; and that, from the Neva to the Seine, from the Urals to the Pyrenees, his hand is at work preparing the way for the new advent. Nor is his work wasted now any more than it has been in the past, during which so many desirable changes have been brought about, so many heroic struggles have been seen, and the French Republic has been set up on the heights.

As he spoke, the question I had put, "Why are you doing nothing now?" was seen to be a question of the unlearned, and one to which he could not make direct answer. Inquiring why his great work, Capital, the seed field of so many crops, had not been put into Russian and French from the original German, he seemed unable to tell, but said that a proposition for an English translation had come to him from New York. He said that that book was but a fragment, a single part of a work in three parts, two of the parts being yet unpublished, the full trilogy being "Land," "Capital," "Credit," the last part, he said, being largely illustrated from the United States, where credit has had such an amazing development. Mr. Marx is an observer of American action, and his remarks upon some of the formative and substantive forces of American life were full of suggestiveness. By the way, in referring to his Capital, he said that anyone who might want to read it would find the French translation superior in many ways to the German original. Mr. Marx referred to Henri Rochefort, the Frenchman, and in his talk of some of his dead disciples, the stormy Bakunin, the brilliant Lassalle and others, I could see how deeply his genius had taken hold of men who, under the circumstances, might have directed the course of history.

The afternoon is waning toward the long twilight of an English summer evening as Mr. Marx discourses, and he proposes a walk through the seaside town and along the shore to the beach, upon which we see many thousand people, largely children disporting themselves. Here we find on the sands his family party -- the wife, who had already welcomed me, his two daughters with their children, and his two sons-in-law, one of whom is professor in Kings College, London, and the other, I believe, a man of letters. It was a delightful party -- about ten in all -- the father of the two young

wives, who were happy with their children, and the grandmother of the children, rich in the joysomeness and serenity of her wifely nature. Not less finely than Victor Hugo himself does Karl Marx understand the art of being a grandfather; but more fortunate than Hugo, the married children of Marx live to make jocund his years.

Toward nightfall, he and his sons-in-law part from their families to pass an hour with their American guest. And the talk was of the world, and of man, and of time, and of ideas, as our glasses tinkled over the sea. The railway train waits for no man, and night is at hand. Over the thought of the babblement and rack of the age and the ages, over the talk of the day and the scenes of the evening, arose in my mind one question touching upon the final law of being, for which I would seek answer from this sage. Going down to the depths of language and rising to the height of emphasis, during an interspace of silence, I interrupted the revolutionist and philosopher in these fateful words: "What is?"

And it seemed as though his mind were inverted for a moment while he looked upon the roaring sea in front and the restless multitude upon the beach. "What is?" I had inquired, to which, in deep and solemn tone, he replied: "Struggle!" At first it seemed as though I had heard the echo of despair: but peradventure it was the law of life.

Appendix B

Karl Marx's Comments on the Translating of "Das Kapital"*

by John Swinton

There is a rumpus among the disciples of Karl Marx in London about the translating from German into English of his masterpiece, "Capital." It has just been translated by John Broadhouse, and is now being published piecemeal, in the London magazine, The Day. But Frederick Engels, one of Mr. Marx's literary executors, has fired a broadside into Broadhouse's translation. He shows that Broadhouse has an imperfect knowledge of German, with a feeble command of English, and that he is wholly unfitted to translate this most untranslatable of German prose writers.

This squabble recalls to my mind the remarks made to me about the translation of Capital by Karl Marx himself, when I spent an afternoon with him at the English town of Ramsgate five years ago. Asking him why it had not been put in English, as it had been put in French and Russian, from the original German, he replied that a proposition for an English translation had come to him from New York, and then he went on to make other remarks that ought to be of interest to both Broadhouse and Engels. He said that his German text was often obscure and that it would be found exceedingly difficult to turn it into English. "But look at the translation into French," he said as he presented me with a copy of the Paris edition of "Le Capital." "That," he continued, "is far clearer, and the style better than the German original. It is from this that the translation into English ought to be made, and I wish you would say so to any one in New York who may try to put the book into English. I really took great pain in revising this French translation which was made by J. Roy; I went over every word of the French manuscript and much of the language and many of the passages so hard to turn from German into English can be easily translated from the French version. When it is put into English," he repeated, "let the French version be used."

These are the words of Karl Marx himself which are now for the first time put in print.

*From John Swinton's Paper, November 29, 1885.

A few days ago in taking up the first chapter of Mr. Broadhouse's translation, my eye fell on a sentence so obscure as to be unintelligible, but in turning to the French version, the meaning of the sentence was plain.

It would seem as though Mr. Marx's literary executors must have heard from his own lips what he said to me in August of 1880.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Swinton, John. The New Issue: The Chinese-American Question. New York: American News Company, 1870.
- _____. The Tompkins Square Outrage: Appeal of John Swinton. Address to the (New York State) Legislature Through the Committee on Grievances, and Delivered to the Assembly Chamber at Albany, March 25, 1874.
- _____. John Swinton's Travels: Current Views and Notes of Forty Days in France and England. New York: C. W. Carleton & Company, 1880.
- _____. Old Ossawatimie Brown, Speech on 22nd Anniversary of John Brown's Death. Delivered in Turn Hall, New York, December 1, 1881.
- _____. John Swinton's Address Before the American Federation of Labor Convention, 1892. New York: American Federation of Labor, 1893.
- _____. Striking for Life: Labor's Side of the Labor Question. (With articles contributed by Eugene V. Debs, Samuel Gompers and John W. Hayes). New York: American Manufacturing and Publishing Company, 1894.
- _____. A Momentous Question: The Respective Attitudes of Labor and Capital. Philadelphia: A.R. Keller Publishing Company, 1895.
- _____. John Swinton's Paper. New York: 1883-1887.

Secondary Sources

- Allen, Gay Wilson. The Solitary Singer, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928.
- _____, ed. Walt Whitman Abroad. (Includes the article, "Whitman in Russia," by Stephen Stepanchev.) Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1955.

- Berger, Meyer. The Story of the New York Times, 1851-1951. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1951.
- Carpenter, George Rice. Walt Whitman, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924.
- Calmer, Alan. Labor Agitator: The Story of Albert R. Parsons. New York: International Publishers, 1937.
- Debs, Eugene V. John Swinton: Radical Editor and Leader. Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Oriole Press, 1939. Originally published in Pearson's Magazine, February 1918.
- _____. Debs Scrapbooks. Tamiment Library, New York University.
- Ely, Richard T. Ground Under Our Feet: An Autobiography. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938.
- Foner, Philip S. History of American Labor, Vol. II. New York: International Publishers, 1955.
- _____, ed. When Karl Marx Died. New York: International Publishers, 1973.
- _____. "Protests in the United States Against Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law." International Review of Social History, Vol. XXI (1976), Part 1.
- Halloway, Emory. Whitman -- An Interpretation in Narrative. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.
- Hough, Robert Lee. The Quiet Rebel: William Dean Howells as Social Commentator. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska, 1959.
- Kirk, Clara M. and Rudolf. William Dean Howells. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962.
- Lynn, Kenneth S. William Dean Howells: An American Life. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970.
- Maverick, August. Henry J. Raymond and the New York Press. New York: Arno Press, 1971 (reprint). Original edition, 1870.
- O'Brien, Frank M. The Story of the Sun, 1833-1928. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1928.

Ross, Marc. "John Swinton, Journalist and Reformer: His Active Years." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New York University Graduate School, 1969.

Sinclair, Upton. The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest. Introduction by Jack London. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1915.

_____. The Brass Check. Published by the author at Pasadena, Calif., 1920.

Trachtenberg, Alexander, ed. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Letters to Americans, 1848-1895. Translated by Leonard E. Mins. New York: International Publishers, 1953.

Traubel, Horace. With Walt Whitman in Camden. Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1906.

Waters, Robert. Career and Conversation of John Swinton, Journalist, Orator, and Economist. Chicago, 1902.

Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. XII, p. 490. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937.

National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. XII, p. 418. New York: James T. White & Company, 1900.

The New York Sun, September 6, 1880, page 1.

The author is grateful for courtesies extended by the staff of Tamiment Library (New York University), which made available John Swinton's Paper (1883-1887) on microfilm, as well as other rare resource materials. I would also like to thank my daughter, Emily, for her painstaking copy editing and

proofreading of the manuscript.

HD 8073 S84 G23 1976
GARLIN SENDER
JOHN SWINTON AMERICAN
RADICAL 1829-1901
39294527 HSS



000004631297

DATE DUE SLIP

HD 8073 S84 G23 1976
Garlin, Sender.
John Swinton, American
radical, 1829-1901 :
0198867T MAIN